

MEDICAL WOMEN:

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MEDICAL WOMEN.

MORE than one attempt has been made of late by earnest women to obtain admission into the medical profession. I believe that in the United States of America several ladies are already practising as physicians, with what success I am not able to say. In England, one lady, Miss Garrett, has found a door open to her, and is exercising her art with distinguished usefulness to her sex, and with no less honour and, as I trust, profit to herself. To many minds this may appear—I confess it does to my own—to settle the question of the admission of women into the ranks of medical practitioners. If one woman can usefully exercise the healing art, there can be no conceivable reason why thousands should not follow her example. More than that, there are so many cases requiring medical help which seem specially to call for the attendance and advice of women, that one is fain to wonder, not that they demand permission to learn and practise medicine, but that they should not have been long ago invited to do so. In the sufferings of women and children there is much which seems to a layman's eyes fitter for feminine than masculine minds to deal with. In childbirth, above all, I can understand the presence of any man, except her husband, being at once odious and mischievous to the labouring woman: odious because it is one of those bodily functions which her nature teaches her to keep as far as she may out of the sight of men, and hence mischievous, because her muscles answer to her instincts, and, revolting from the presence and touch of man, refuse that easy play and ready action which is best calculated to shorten her pangs and save the life both of herself and her

infant.* At the same time I fully admit that it is possible, I may even go so far as to say commendable, for a woman to avail herself of the advice and skill of a man under any suffering her nature may impose upon her. She may argue with equal truth and modesty that in times of sorrow and pain sex is forgotten; that she meets the leech who helps and heals her on the ground of common humanity; that she sees in him nothing but a kind and health-giving hand, busy in a work which stands next to the ministry of the Gospel in Christian dignity. And it would be a wicked injustice to omit full acknowledgment of the merits of the medical profession in this department of their duty. Nothing is rarer than for a woman to find in the conduct or deportment of her attendant anything which can give pain to her mind. I believe that, as a matter of fact, any fault in that direction is almost without example. I think I can assert—and my means of knowing the state of the case have not been inconsiderable—that women would with one voice bear testimony to the desire shown by the great body of medical men to be regarded by them in the light of God's ministers, sent to their bedsides on errands of humanity and mercy. Nor do I in this speak merely of the heads of the profession, or of married men of mature age. I have seen a little of one or two hospitals, and to the best of my belief there exists among the bulk of medical students a right and becoming sense of the gravity of their ministry. It is, therefore, far from my purpose to find fault with medical men in this matter. If by degrees practice has fallen almost exclusively into their hands in ailments wherein it would often be better for women to be

* I cannot say how long it has been customary for childing women to call in the help of the doctor. I have been told, I know not with what truth, that the fashion was set by one of Louis XV's mistresses. The word *midwife* of course shows that it must have been unknown to our ancestors; yet there is no reason to think that childbirth was more destructive of life in their day than in our own. Indeed, as midwives now-a-days practise almost exclusively among the poor, and it is notorious that poor women get through their hour of trial more easily than their wealthier sisters, the balance of safety seems to incline to them. Medical men always say that in difficult cases women are useless. But it is probable that the number of such cases is more than met by the number of those which are rendered dangerous by the presence of a man.

attended by women, it is due to a silent and scarcely perceptible course of events over which they could by no possibility exercise control. For the existing state of things was brought about by no sudden change, made in obedience to the theories or discoveries of some leading teacher; it has come to pass simply and solely through the slow and irresistible influence of fashion. The only effectual means of stemming the tide available to the individual practitioner was to refuse to visit a woman asking his aid in her extremity. I should hope, and I honestly believe, that no medical man of respectability was ever known to do so. But what I do say is, that many women cannot bring their minds to receive the services of men with equanimity; that if they cannot do so, to force on them the choice between such services and unaided suffering is a cruelty; further, that it is a cruelty of that kind which it is a peculiar shame to men not to seek to relieve them from without an hour's delay. Every one understands how much in affairs of this kind depends on a woman's will. Many things, right and laudable with her free and intelligent consent, become in the absence of that consent cruel and wrong. I say that this is one of such things, and I desire to call the attention of my countrymen to it. If I am asked why I come forward, I reply that circumstances have, by a kind of accident, made me better acquainted than many of my contemporaries with the feelings and sorrows of women. Indeed, I say, frankly and unreservedly, that on this subject I am but a voice; but I say too, that I am in it the voice of much anguish; of how much let the following extract serve for a specimen:—

“I hope you will, when opportunity offers, give to other men the impression I convey to you, for I wish men should know what women think; but it is a subject so hard to speak of, that women are mostly silent on it. This, however, I *must* say, that I think the compulsory attendance of men on women in special ailments is one of the bitterest and shamefullest cruelties which the stronger sex has ever practised on the weaker. We women dare not speak, but, O God, what we have suffered! God has endowed women with a peculiar sen-

sitiveness, or sense of modesty, so acute that I think a man can scarcely understand it. That this sensitiveness,—these pure, fine, delicate feelings, which were part of our Creator's dower to us for wise purposes,—should be lacerated, torn, put to exquisite torture, and then, in many cases, at last deadened and killed—tell me, can this be agreeable to the will of God? I have known sweet young girls who pined away and died from the shock of such treatment. One, who had been put into a doctor's hands for special treatment, was cured physically, but her parents were so terrified for her mind, and she wept so constantly over the shame, that they had to take her about to travel abroad, and divert her in every way to try to obliterate the memory. Again, I knew a dear dignified lady who, in middle life, chose death rather than male attendance. She calmly said:—‘It is as well to die one way as another. The treatment I should have to undergo from a man would kill me through my mind.’ There are (the writer continues) people who pretend that women do not feel as they do about it. Of course, every woman will try not to shew that she is wretched under it—*she will try to make herself into a stone.*”

These are the strong words of a woman writing out of her agony. Few men, I trust, can read them unmoved. I do not see how any man can refuse to acknowledge that the burden rests with those who deny medical education to women, to shew cause for that denial. Nature, in accents that cannot be mistaken, emphatically demands a woman's care for a woman's suffering. Are men so bold as to contradict nature, and say she lies, or is a fool? Surely not. Assuming, therefore, as I am confident I may do without hesitation, that there is a great and growing cry for medical women from their own sex, I will at once proceed to address myself to the only two questions which appear to arise upon this assumption. These are, first, whether there are women willing and able to adopt medicine as a profession; second, whether opportunities of learning the art can be opened to them. I hope to be able to give an affirmative reply to both.

To the first, at any rate, women have themselves replied

by acclamation. I suppose there is scarcely a medical school in England, France, Germany, or the United States, to which women have not in the course of the past ten or twelve years either directly applied for admission, or inquired through friends whether, if asked for, it was likely to be granted. The difficulties Miss Garrett encountered, and the self-denying perseverance by which she overcame them, are well known to the world. Miss Sophia Jex Blake is earnestly striving to overcome similar obstacles, with what alternations of success and disappointment—a disappointment fraught with dark omen of the hard measure the rising generation of young men are likely to mete out to women—is equally notorious. Nor do I think any one is likely to deny that these ladies may fairly be regarded in the light of representatives of a large number of their sisters. Miss Jex Blake says:—"Several of the American Medical Schools for men have at different times granted degrees to women, and there are now established special colleges for that purpose. I have already stated that the President of the Washington University in St. Louis maintained the views that I have just advocated, he having professed to me his readiness to examine and grant a degree to any woman, who by private study had duly qualified herself to receive it. The University of Göttingen some years ago conferred the degree of Doctor of Philosophy on a female student, afterwards Frau Doctor Rodda, and two ladies have recently studied Medicine at the University of Zurich. I believe, indeed, that many more instances might be adduced, had any one the inclination and the leisure to collect them; but these will probably suffice at least to show the direction in which the tide is already setting." (*Visit to some American Schools and Colleges*, p. 249.)

Nor, if what Miss Blake further says be well founded, can the opposition to the admission of ladies into the ranks of medical practitioners be very formidable. She writes:—"If women care enough for learning to conquer all difficulties in its pursuit, and simply ask that, when successful, their success shall be acknowledged, do national universities fulfil

their trust in refusing the petition? That the time is coming when they will openly acknowledge such a position to be untenable, is made hopefully apparent by the fact, that the University of London recently refused, *by the Chairman's casting vote only*, a woman's petition for a medical degree."—*Ibid*, p. 248.

If this be really the case, and I suppose, although Miss Blake does not give the date or other particulars of the meeting referred to, she must have taken care to assure herself of the correctness of her statement, the opening of the medical profession to women cannot be far off. For the Senate of the University of London contains a very large number of physicians and surgeons; indeed, if I am not mistaken (I have not a copy of the London University Calendar at hand), a large majority of its members are one or the other. Many of the voters, therefore, on this occasion must have been medical men. I suppose they can scarcely have been all arranged on the one side and an equal number of laymen on the other. Some, therefore, must have voted for, some against, the admission of women to their school. One would be glad to know the reasons which weighed with the latter. Let me say frankly that I do not believe they were mercenary. I do not say that there are no greedy doctors—so long as human nature is corrupt, that will be impossible. But if the books of the profession in general could be laid open to the world, I believe nothing would surprise people more than the large proportion of their work which is done for little or even nothing. Every one knows that the most eminent physicians and surgeons in London—men, every moment of whose time is money—constantly reduce their fees, or even remit them altogether, in favour of needy patients. So among their less fortunate brethren; many a country doctor rides hundreds, aye thousands of miles, visiting poor patients, for attendance on whom he gets hardly enough to pay for the keep of his horse, much less himself. Indeed, so exemplary is the charity of the profession in this particular, that if it did enter into a voter's mind that midwifery constituted a lucrative part of his

practice, he could scarcely be blamed. The right answer to the argument of loss to practitioners, already ill paid, seems to be, that in the long run the profession would not suffer. That it is not rapidly increasing in numbers is easily shewn. It is enough to print the following returns:—

1851.—Males of all Ages.				1861.—Males of all Ages.			
Physicians .. ..	..	..	1,771	Physicians .. ..	..	..	2,385
Surgeons .. ..	..	..	13,470	Surgeons, Apothecaries ..	..	..	12,030
Other <i>Medical Men</i> ..	..	..	3,949	Medical Students, Assistants	..	..	3,566
				Dentists .. ..	..	..	1,567
			<hr/> 19,190				<hr/> 19,548*

That is to say, that while the population has multiplied at the rate, I suppose, of something like 1 in 5, the medical profession has scarcely advanced at all. Medicine herein is only partaking of the lot that has fallen to other professions. Men will not encounter the certainty of hard work and the possibility of starvation, when trade and emigration with open arms invite them to come in and find a certainty of abundance. Will any man try to stop this process? He might as well set to work to sew the Eildon Hills together again. In the ministry of the Gospel, bishops are learning to meet a great and growing diminution in the numbers of the clergy by ordaining lay-agents and deaconesses: doubtless, a mere return to the will of their Master. So it will be with the heads of the medical profession. They must before long become alive to the fact that, while the work increases with the population, the number of hands to do it is nearly stationary. Now, in trade it might be said, increase your charges. But this the doctor in a poor district cannot do. As the population in his neighbourhood multiplies, so do the calls on his time multiply, while his purse is but slightly swelled by a number of small fees, which scarcely pay the actual cost of drugs and the means of conveyance from place to place. Even in wealthy districts he is not able to defend himself so strongly as might be supposed. For competition naturally

* *Census, 1851—Table xxv. iii. 3. 1861—xix. iii. 3. Summary of Population Tables, Ages, Civil Conditions and Occupations of the People in England and Wales.*

flows towards rich neighbourhoods, and young men, eager for practice, are not always over scrupulous about popularity hunting. On the other hand, a man can seldom reckon on being supported by his patients against a pushing rival. For little as it is to their credit, the plain truth is, that the last person the richest people will pay is the doctor. No charges are more haggled over and grumbled at than his. On the whole, I honestly believe that the profession in general might turn over a large part of their present duties into other hands without ultimate loss, and that their average incomes would be better than at present, because the diminution in receipts would be more than counterbalanced by the diminution in numbers and in labour of recipients. No one, I apprehend, will deny that women can be fairly remunerated at less cost than men. Now, I do not pretend to anything like a scientific knowledge of political economy, but surely unaided common sense cannot be wrong in coming to the conclusion, that to employ the more costly labour, where less costly would answer the purpose, is bad for all parties. Take nursing: I suppose no one would maintain that to employ men instead of women as nurses would be good economy. Carry the rule then a little farther, and if there be other departments of the healing art which may safely be entrusted to women, hand them over accordingly. As far as money is concerned, I cannot but think the result would simply be, that there would be fewer men in the profession, each doing less work and each getting better paid for it. The only class who would really suffer would be that of *ladies' doctors*, as they are called. These the changes proposed would probably exterminate, and, I cannot help adding, a good thing too. I confess I have not a grain of faith in these specialties. A man devoting himself to a single and limited branch of any profession—medicine perhaps more than any other—is apt to become narrow and morbid in his views. In particular, he is almost sure to get a sort of trick of referring every affection to those causes which have chiefly occupied his attention. I think I am not wrong in stating that young men of the highest ability and promise, when beginning

to rise into large practice as physicians or surgeons, strive hard to avoid being consulted on one class of maladies alone, and that they do so on this very ground.* I confess that if I had any sufferer akin to me, whose case required further aid than that a lady like Miss Garrett could give, I should be far more willing to take her to a physician or surgeon in general practice, than to a ladies' doctor, if only on the ground of probably superior skill and better success in treatment. But to return. I put out of view mercenary motives, which I repeat I do not lay to the door of the profession, and inquire what are likely to have been the grounds of opposition. One, and that a main one, probably was a fear lest if women were admitted they would trespass on the proper domain of men. I fear if I were to say that men have trespassed on the domain of women in medicine, and that they ought therefore not to complain if the sex retaliate upon them, I should fail to disarm the adversaries. Nor, indeed, did so shameful an argument possess the smallest weight with any mind, would I condescend to use it. I own at once, and without reserve, that for women to attend men might possibly introduce evils as great as those with which I am at present concerned. I do not see, however, the smallest reason to fear that, in this country at least, any woman would venture upon an unseemliness of this kind. What in the all but universal *bouleversement* of decency and nature which appears to prevail in Paris (not, I trust and believe, in France generally) just now, may come to pass there, I cannot tell, any more than I can tell what the defiant boldness of a section of American women may adventure; but assuredly, whatever we do or do not do in this matter will not affect either one or the other one iota, and not one word has been said by any English lady indicating the slightest tendency to a hankering in that direction. All the

* It will be observed, that to decline to meddle with cases with which a man feels his ordinary course of practice has unfitted him to deal, is another thing. Thus, for example, I have known able surgeons refuse to touch the eye, on the ground that operations requiring much physical strength and involving comparatively rough work, destroy the subtlety of finger necessary for operating on so delicate an organ.

communications I have received agree in one point—in speaking only of being permitted to treat women and children. More than that does not appear so much as to pass before the minds of applicants. Besides, nothing can be easier than to prevent any possibility of further license. Let a clause be inserted in every diploma granted to a woman, forbidding her to attend any patients but women and girls, with boys under seven years of age. With this precaution I cannot help thinking it would be on the lowest grounds prudent for the medical profession to open their doors to women. For now that one or two have found their way in, that abundance more will climb over the wall after them, unless the door be opened pretty soon, I take to be as certain as that the sun shines in the sky.

A subordinate reason for objection, we may suppose to have been a doubt whether women would have the nerve to endure the sight of and contact with suffering, or the intellect to grasp a competent knowledge of medicine and surgery. The former inquiry I confess would never have occurred to my own mind, and I only mention it because I have heard it seriously adduced as an argument against medical women. I should have thought a larger proportion of women than of men able to train themselves to this kind of endurance. I take it that laymen, as a rule, are not only more unnerved by pain in their own persons—a fact I fancy no one will question—but by the sight of it in others, than women. I remember a young married lady standing by the side of a very eminent surgeon while he performed a troublesome and delicate operation on the foot of a youth staying in the same house with herself. She rendered him such assistance as was in her power, received his compliments on her courage, saw him to the door, and fainted. Now, what she did at the end I take it most men would have done at the beginning of the business, and that this is just the difference between the two sexes. A woman screws herself up to do what is wanted, and defers her feelings till afterwards; her brother is useless for the first few times, and by degrees gathers courage to see and deal with suffering with, not indifference but, unflinching

nerve. However, such may not be the case, I have not experience sufficient to enable me to give an opinion on the question; but that women can be trained to all that can possibly be required of them, I cannot for a moment doubt. If in time of war a woman can spend days and nights in a military hospital—shrieks and groans of wounded men ever and anon ringing in her ear, pain and anguish such as eye never sees elsewhere, relieved only by death in the most awful forms, ever in her sight, and walk in the midst of all with a bearing so calm, so peaceful, so godlike, that her very shadow brings comfort to the sufferer: will any one persuade me that no woman will have nerve to help a sister through her travail, prolonged and painful as it may be—will have the strength of mind to console both the patient and herself

“With thought, it must be, ’tis love’s fruit, the end for which she lives,
The mean to make herself new-born: what comforts will redound”?

I cast such doubts to the winds.

Of the peculiar fitness of women, provided they can acquire the requisite skill and knowledge of medicine, for dealing with the infirmities of their own sex and of children, I feel I need say nothing. That will probably be admitted on all hands. A reserved patient does what he can to defeat the doctor. Unless he has full faith in him, and tells him with perfect truth and frankness all he knows about himself, his chances of amendment are, to say the least, considerably lessened. Now it is tolerably certain that none but a woman can find her way to the recesses of a girl’s heart. Take a maiden of seventeen or eighteen to consult a man, and rely upon it she will tell him no more than she can help. To shew again the wide extent of the reluctance, nay, the absolute refusal in many cases, of women to submit to the inquiry of men into the details of infirmities incidental to their sex, I will give an extract from a letter that has been put into my hands. It was written by one lady to another. She says:—

“I assure you, there is hardly a word in your letter which

I could not most heartily re-echo. There are many things which, if I spoke the whole truth, I should have to put in darker colours than you do. Only scattered instances have come before you. I have seen them almost by hundreds, and know many things to be true which you can only think likely; as for instance, the amount of suffering that goes untreated when men-doctors are only available.

“But it seems to me that the peculiar hardship of our case is, that we cannot put before the public in plain words the facts which would make it quite unanswerable. We cannot say straight out, ‘It is simply indecent that men should come into the absolute physical contact with women that is required in treating cases of uterine disease. It is monstrous to ask pure-minded girls to submit to what cannot but be to them a personal indignity of the most horrible kind.’ That is the simple truth.”

The writer in the same letter goes on to speak of a case that had come under her notice, of a girl “who, after undergoing one examination, felt the fancied shame too acutely to remain at home.” I cite this expression to show that the lady from whose letter I quote is no bigot. She perfectly understands that the poor girl committed no sin, and need have felt no shame. She only feels, what I think every one will admit, that it is a matter in which a woman’s will ought not to be forced. Within fair limits, old Sir Hildebrand was not far wrong in morals when he exclaimed, “It shall ne’er be said there was but one woman in Osbaldistone Hall, and she died for lack o’ her will,” If in such a matter as that with which we are dealing, by forcing a girl’s will you make her miserable, I say you commit a cruelty; if you make her brazen, you do her a wrong. And unless she submits with the full and free consent of her will, one or the other result must follow. Admit women to treat women, and all these troubles and difficulties melt away. Concede that the feminine intellect is strong enough to acquire, and give it the opportunity of gaining, the requisite knowledge of medicine, and the whole grievance is removed. Even supposing that in some respects a woman’s services would be inferior to a

man's, she can claim some compensating advantages. Her delicacy of touch and quickness of perception would enable her often to detect symptoms which might escape a man. In dealing with infants, unable to make known their feelings by articulate speech, this seems to the unprofessional mind to open a way to singular usefulness. Let it be remembered, too, that all women ask is freedom of choice. They do not say, "Forbid men to attend us." What they say is, "Do not force us in our affliction to have recourse to men on pain of death if we refuse."

I do not anticipate that any one will seriously maintain that women are incapable of the mental effort required to learn the art of medicine. They have of late years "given their proofs," so to speak, in great abundance. Do not let me be misunderstood. I do not for a moment believe that women can rival men in powers of mind any more than in powers of body. Nor will any sensible woman be reluctant to confess, or disposed to complain, that it has pleased God to bestow on her endowments different from, or less than, those of her brother. She will doubtless feel that unless the difference between the minds of men and women were as great both in degree and kind as between their bodies, the intellectual intercourse of the sexes would lose all its zest. Either sex has its proper excellence, and neither reason to complain of God. But because you cannot accomplish the ascent of Mont Blanc, it does not follow that you cannot climb up the slopes of Snowdon. No more does it follow because women are not likely to be great poets, or to make grand discoveries in science, that no woman can be a poet at all, or enter into many of the secrets of nature. Granting that women are not likely to rival Hippocrates or Sydenham, I own I do believe that many, if they only had the chance of learning, would prove at least as sound practitioners as a good many men who have reaped both fame and profit in their time. The question arises, then, no doubt the most important and difficult one we encounter in the whole inquiry—How are they to be taught?

The establishment of separate Medical Colleges for the

instruction of young women seems to me out of the question. Supposing even that, once set going, a number of female students could be got together sufficient to maintain them, where are competent lecturers to be found? A man may be a tolerably trustworthy practitioner without being in the least fit to become a teacher, and indeed ability to teach is by comparison so rare, that it is notorious that the existing Medical Schools find it no easy matter to keep up their staff of lecturers. Nor is it likely that a man, having lectured one class in his subject, will come and do his work over again for a fresh set of students who might just as well have been present before. No man could find either leisure or spirits for such a task. The only resource left seems to be that the two sexes should learn together. As this proposal may startle some minds, I will venture to state at length some of the arguments which may be adduced in favour of it, without confining myself altogether to the case of medicine.

When I first heard mixed schools, as they are called, proposed for this country, I felt as much opposed to them as any man could have done. But I own that in the course of the last two or three years my opinions have undergone a change. I am free to acknowledge both that such schools appear to open the way to solving some difficulties in providing for the education of both sexes, which seem otherwise almost insoluble, and that, with some limitations, the objections which presented themselves at first sight do on more ripe consideration crumble away. To begin with, one has to encounter the invincible logic of facts. I have on another occasion cited the example of Rivington School, Lancashire.* To this I may now add the case of a school at the opposite extremity of the kingdom. At Callington, in Cornwall, the exertions of the rector of the parish have succeeded in establishing a mixed school of the most useful character. It was examined this summer by one of the Fellows of Trinity College, Cambridge. This gentleman tells me that in his opinion the system works admirably. There was a famous race between a

* *Practical Essays on Education*, p. 293.

boy and a girl for the place of Captain of the School. The boy beat by a little. "The boys," he said, "seemed to him to have gained in delicacy by the admixture of sexes, and he could not discover that the girls were in any way coarsened by it." Indeed, he even thought that there was a higher standard of propriety among the girls than, if report speaks true, exists in most girls' schools. No one seemed to think it at all strange that boys and girls should sit at their lessons together. In short, the experiment was, in his judgment, entirely successful. Again, there is the example of National Schools. In great town parishes, it is often possible to separate boys and girls entirely. Their means, as well as the number of their scholars of either sex, enable them to have separate buildings and separate staffs of teachers. But this is far from being the case in many country places, where, although there is nominally a master for the boys and a mistress for the girls, they are obliged, in order to cope with the task before them, to mix their work a good deal. The folding-doors are often flung back in order that one may take the general superintendence of the school, while the other gives the eldest or the youngest scholars of both sexes some special lesson. Now it does not appear to be the opinion of the clergy, or of the general public, that the growth of National Schools has injured either the manners or morals of country parishes. There is one excellent point—one indeed that should never be lost sight of in this matter—in the management of National Schools: the boys are distinctly placed under the master; the girls under the mistress. Both, therefore, receive their chief training, whether in learning or discipline, from teachers of their own sex. I do not see, therefore, on the whole, why it should be said, as it is commonly said by the opponents of mixed schools, that they are too alien from our national habits and views to succeed. And after all, are they not simply a return to the order of nature? Nature has not ordained that one marriage shall produce none but boys, another none but girls, but makes most fruitful of both. Why should we not say that as boys and girls are brought up together in the family, so they may be brought up together

in the school? It requires some much stronger argument than the accident of our present habits to prove that this will not do. Under the pressure of great difficulty, it is scarcely ever wrong to go to nature for guidance. We are, as a nation, unquestionably at this moment under a great difficulty in regard to the education of our youth. Use the means well and we have plenty for boys, but for girls above the rank of servants scarcely any. What is to be done? To my mind, it is not easy to show that it is unwise or immoral to have recourse to the order of nature and teach both under one roof. At the same time, I am very far from saying that there should be no limitations to the rule. Every one, I think, will grant that it is not desirable, if it can be avoided, to let women teach schools consisting exclusively of boys, or men of girls. Again, to say nothing of the different studies likely to be pursued by persons able to prolong their education beyond fifteen or sixteen years of age, the close quarters of school life are better avoided in the case of young men and women together, at all events while profligacy in the former is condoned as it at present is by society. But I cannot see what objection can be raised to the professorial teaching of Universities being addressed to audiences consisting of both men and women. At Cambridge, the lectures of many of the Professors have been, for many years past, indeed for anything I know from time immemorial, regularly attended by ladies. I have been accustomed from childhood to hear much of University affairs, and I never heard so much as a whisper of objection to the presence of women in the lecture rooms. Yet there must have been numberless occasions on which the professor was compelled to enter upon topics requiring quite as careful and delicate treatment as any that could occur in lectures on medicine. The truth is, there is no branch of moral or natural science that may not be kept pure, or made prurient, at the will of the expounder. If any one doubts this, let him see how some French writers have contrived to deal with botany. In treating of the purest and loveliest of all the natural sciences, they have contrived to suggest such filthy thoughts that their books are simply

disgusting to every right-minded reader, man or woman. But surely this is not necessary. Secure purity of thought and propriety of expression, and there is nothing which may not in fit time and place be spoken of between men and women. Are wives ashamed of being seen to be with child? Does any mother shrink from speaking of the birth of the infant in her arms? Or was the plainspokenness of the Virgin Mary unmaidenly, when she said to the Angel, "*How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?*" I am bold enough to say that there is nothing in the art of healing which may not fitly be spoken of before an audience of both sexes, provided there be a generally good tone prevailing among them, and the lecturer be of a pure and manly spirit. Indeed, I will go farther and say that his example in treating subjects of the kind incidental to his work with equal purity and courage, will be far from the least valuable part of his teaching. It will bring home to the hearts of his hearers, with more force than any other argument, the truth that every creature, every ordinance of God, is good and pure. Probably the chief objections to the admission of women into the craft will lie in the dissecting-room. Without question the work that must there be done is at once most necessary and most revolting to the tiro. Equally without question, would it be unseemly to permit students of both sexes to frequent this room together. But there could be no difficulty in setting apart hours for the attendance of female students, or, should the school be a large one, a separate room. If a woman could not be found competent to undertake the office of demonstrator, it must be entrusted to a man of approved character and discretion. Soon, no doubt, there would be plenty of women competent to the task. But take it at the worst, let it be supposed that women can never be employed as demonstrators in anatomy to their own sex, is the teaching of anatomy by men to women comparable in unseemliness to what under the present system may happen, and probably does happen, daily? There is nothing to prevent a young practitioner of five-and-twenty conducting the most delicate examination upon the person of a

living girl of eighteen. Yet this is thought decent, and a thing which the profession is not called upon to take steps to render unnecessary, or forbid altogether, while it is held intolerable that a woman should be in the same room with a man in the presence of a piece of earth—for after all a corpse is no more than a piece of earth. If this be not Pharisaism, I don't know the meaning of the word. Or is any one prepared to go so far as to say that anatomy is under all circumstances a study unfit for women? If so, I would reply by the inquiry, Can it be God's will that the secrets of the human frame should be made known to men and hidden from women? In point of fact, acquaintance with them is evidently of far more general importance to the latter than to the former. For men may, and very often do, go from birth to the grave without ever experiencing more than the most trifling disorders of any vital function. It is no exaggeration to say that, as a rule, the less a layman knows about his own body the better. Whereas every woman that lives—wife, mother, or maiden—is always exposed to infirmities that go to sap her very life.

I feel, however, I have said enough. I have gathered up as well as I can the reasons for the admission of women to the medical profession. If stronger ones can be produced against them, I am ready to be convinced. If, on the contrary, a door can be opened to women I shall rejoice, partly because it will be a relief to many who pine in secret and untold suffering, partly because it will open to the sex a new resource for earning bread. Upon this part of the subject I do not propose to dilate at any length. Every one knows that the order of nature is at present upset in this country, that women largely outnumber men; that this disproportion is greatest in what we may call the professional classes; and that consequently it is there that want of daily bread is most pressing among women. People say, "Why don't they become governesses?" The answer is, that it is impossible to find situations for so many as one hundred thousand governesses, while there are nearly three millions of women in the United Kingdom who have

to support themselves by their own exertions. Of these it may be estimated that fully one-sixth are born in a rank of life which makes menial labour a trial almost worse than starvation. Even if it be argued that a woman always does right in earning honest bread, it may be replied, while we concede it, that it is hard she should be forced to sink in the social scale and live in the kitchen with footmen and housemaids, while her brother is under no such necessity. For while nothing is harder than for a single woman, well born and bred, but without means of her own, to maintain herself in the rank due to her birth, nothing is easier than for a single man to do so. Poor indeed he may be, but with fair industry and tolerably good health, a decent coat and sufficient food are always within reach. How far different the case is with women, let any man use his own opportunities of inquiring. If he does not feel that what he finds is a sin, and a shame to men, I can only say I am very sorry for him. Unhappily, the apathy with which men have too long regarded this state of things is already bringing a bitter curse on the country. That debauchery can ever be rooted out of the land I am not rash enough to hope, any more than to say that there are not women as well as men wilfully and determinedly dissolute. But I do say, that when there are thousands upon thousands of women who have to make the dreadful choice between want and the streets, it is time for men to look about them. It will not do to fold our hands and say that this is the natural fruit of civilization, or with worse than ostrich-like folly to seek to drive the plague out of sight with a policeman's truncheon. The first thing to be done is to treat women in a different spirit. Hitherto we have used them as children, kept them in pupillage and imposed upon them so many restrictions that if we bid them earn their own bread they may well retort upon us and say that, with Egyptian tyranny, we bid them eat while we take the meat from their mouths. Has not God given them talents to improve against the Great Day? Has He, at the same time, denied them discretion how to use them? I believe that if we opened to women every calling not

distinctly unfeminine, we should be in the end, from every point of view, gainers. Take divinity. Of how much drawing-room theology we should get rid if women had the opportunities of study so freely open to men, and if their presence were regularly recognized in divinity lecture-rooms. Or, how are deaconesses to be fitted for their office if every means of learning how to discharge it remain closed to them? Christ, at all events, was not deterred from admitting women to His teaching by any fear lest they should intrude themselves upon duties unfitted for their sex. That they are not less eager now-a-days to know His doctrine than they were when He was on earth is clear to any one who does not shut his eyes. It is women who crowd the churches of popular preachers, women who are caught by ritualistic gewgaws and rush to the secret orgies of the confessional. They do it in innocence; the guilty are those who mislead them. To sum up all in a word,—Women throughout Europe are earnestly beseeching men to open to them the door of knowledge. Shall we reply by locking it in their faces and taking away the key? God in His mercy on the world forbid!